

## **URBAN CORRIDORS OFFICE UPDATE**

### **BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the  
JULY 2004 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

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### **PURPOSE:**

To update the Commission on the UCO Communications Plan and Public Opinion Research.

### **ACTION/OUTCOME:**

No action is required by the Commission.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Urban Corridors Office conducted public opinion research between April and June of 2004 for the purposes of:

1. Providing baseline data for the development of UCO's Communications Plan Update.
2. Providing baseline data for the development of WSDOT's Communications Plan Update.
3. Providing baseline data to be used by decision makers in the WTP update.

Six focus groups and a 500-person, statistically valid, phone survey of residents in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties were utilized to gather data. The cost for this work was \$109,900.

### **DISCUSSION:**

We learned a number of interesting things:

#### **Focus Group Conclusions**

- People are cranky, skeptical about government, worried about the economy.
- People like the projects.
- People want the transportation problem solved and have high expectations about how to do that.
  - The problem - congestion: stop and go traffic; lack of reliability and alternatives.
  - Expectations - projects will significantly reduce travel times, (save 20 minutes per trip or cut current travel times by 20% to 30%). Improvements will last for years.
- People don't like taxes.
- If you have to raise taxes, need a mix to raise the kind of money we are talking about.
- People like transit, but when asked what to fund, said roads.
- People are hungry for a plan that is simple and makes sense.
- People are hungry for leadership but no one emerged.

- Environmental, safety and economic benefits of transportation projects were seen as secondary issues (at best) to solving congestion.

### **Survey Findings**

- WSDOT's approval rating is up.
  - Favorability rating was 57%, with a 2 to 1 ratio of favorable to unfavorable.
  - Past surveys conducted by others (and structured slightly differently) have given WSDOT favorability ratings consistently at 50% or 51%.
- WSDOT wanted to learn what about transportation and transit is most problematic or frustrating for people.
  - Driving - People who drive alone represented 71% of all respondents. They said:
 

Other people's driving behaviors	49%
Stop and go traffic on freeways	37%
Congestion on local streets	35%
Bottlenecks at on and off ramps	32%
- A majority of people don't think we need new money to fund transportation projects.
- People don't agree on where to spend the money.
- People don't like taxes.
- When told that \$100 billion worth of transportation investments would be needed over the next 30 years, less than half think we will need more money, but 15% said the didn't know.
- People were split evenly on their top investment priorities:
  - 33% maintenance and repair.
  - 34% improve/expand the system.
  - 33% mass transit.
- Tax Sources.
- Tolls, user fees and car tabs were supported by a thin majority of votes (55% and 50% respectively).
- Gas tax and sales tax were strongly opposed (66% and 69% respectively).
- MVET and weight fees were slightly opposed (51% and 52% respectively).

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

No action is necessary.

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